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Extended Bridge Inspection Frequencies

Background

As part of the recently completed Office of Auditor General (OAG) audit to assess the effectiveness of MDOT's efforts to ensure that its Bridge Inspection Program complies with State and federal requirements related to staff qualifications and inspection processes, a recommendation was made to seek amendatory legislation to establish risk-based inspection frequencies.

MDOT is currently required to inspect all state owned bridges at a maximum frequency of every twenty four months per section 254.19a of the *Michigan Compiled Laws*. The only current exception to this law is under water element inspections, which are conducted every sixty months.

House Bill 4455 as proposed will amend section 19a (MCL 254.19a) of 1982 PA 375 as follows:

Sec. 19a. The state transportation department shall institute ***AND IMPLEMENT*** ~~*a systematic*~~ ***FEDERALLY COMPLIANT AND RISK-BASED INSPECTION*** *plan* ~~*of biennial inspection of*~~ ***FOR*** *all bridges under its jurisdiction.*

MDOT provided State Representative Glardon's office with the proposed language.

Discussion

As part of the response to the OAG audit, MDOT agreed to consider seeking amendatory legislation to establish risk-based bridge inspection frequencies and will also consider seeking Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approval to lengthen the inspection intervals for State-owned and locally owned bridges or categories of bridges that warrant longer interval. HB 4455 is the first step in fulfilling this commitment.

Emphasis should be placed on the fact that risk-based inspection frequencies allow for some freedom to extend inspection frequencies for a population of bridges that may be in good condition, or bridge types where there is past history of durability, and reliability. These would be considered low risk bridges, and we could propose to extend the inspection frequencies up to 48 months. The following criteria could be applied:

- Bridges in good condition only
- Bridges with span lengths less than 100 feet
- Bridges with load path redundancy
- Bridges not scour critical
- Bridges not posted for overloads
- Bridges not susceptible to vehicular damage (high load hits)
- A new, or newly rehabilitated bridge
- Culverts in good or fair condition